

US EPA, Region 9
Community Involvement Office
75 Hawthorne Street (SFD-3)
San Francisco, CA 94105
Attn: Alheli Baños
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La traducción al Español se encuentra en el interior

For More Information...

For more information about environmental studies at the Cooper Drum Site or about our community involvement program, please contact:

U.S. EPA, Region 9
(800) 231-3075

Eric Yunker, Remedial Project Manager
(415) 972-3159

Alheli Baños, Community Involvement Coordinator
(415) 972-3245

You can also review environmental documents about the Cooper Drum Superfund Site at the Information Repository located at:

Leland R. Weaver Library
4035 Tweedy Blvd.
South Gate, CA

Hours:
Tuesday: 10 am–8 pm Friday: 10 am–5 pm
Wednesday: 10 am–8 pm Saturday: 12-noon–5 pm
Thursday: 10 am–6 pm Closed Sunday and Monday

If you would like to get involved and stay informed about the Cooper Drum Superfund Site...

Please clip this response coupon and return it to:

US EPA, Region 9
Community Involvement Office
Attn: Alheli Baños
75 Hawthorne Street (SFD-3)
San Francisco, CA 94105

- ☐ I would like to discuss my concerns about this site
☐ I would like to receive future mailings
☐ Please correct my name or address
☐ Please delete me from your mailing list

Name: Tel. (Optional): (.....)

Address:

If you belong to a group or organization, please let us know:



EPA Adds Cooper Drum Site to Superfund List

Fact Sheet #1 – February 2002

THE PURPOSE OF THIS FACT SHEET

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has added the Cooper Drum Site to the National Priorities List (NPL) of the nation’s most environmentally critical hazardous waste sites. Now that the site is on the NPL, also called the Superfund List, EPA must follow a formal process to investigate and clean up the site. EPA also has developed a community involvement program to keep you informed about environmental issues at the Cooper Drum Site.

PLEASE NOTE:

The contamination in the environment at the Cooper Drum Site has not moved to any of the locations that have been considered for new school construction projects. The U.S. EPA’s activities at the Cooper Drum Site do not have anything to do with the Los Angeles Unified School District’s activities or any other current school siting issues in South Gate.

When Cooper Drum was in business from 1971-1992, the reconditioning process consisted of flushing out and stripping the drums for painting and resale. Heavy duty cleaning called “hard washing” was also performed, when necessary. Before the late 1980s, fluids generated by the reconditioning and “hard washing” were collected in open concrete pits and trenches. This led to the contamination of the soil and groundwater beneath the site (groundwater is water found below ground surface). **The contamination from the Cooper Drum Site is not affecting your drinking water.**

The purpose of this fact sheet is to:

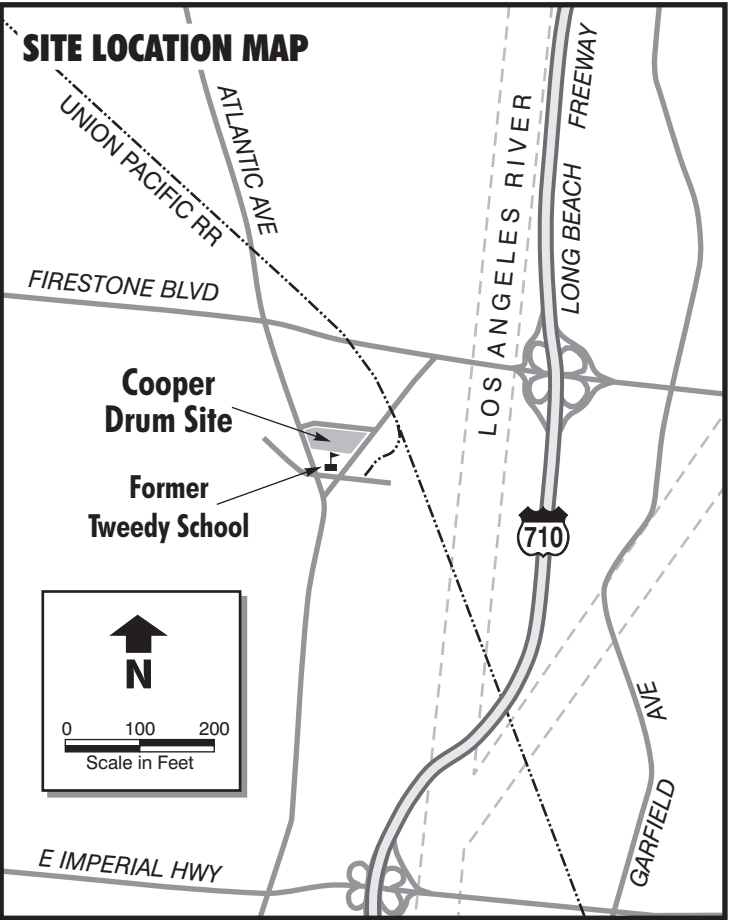
- Tell you about environmental conditions at the Cooper Drum Site;
- Explain the process that EPA will use to gather environmental information about the site; and
- Let you know how you can stay informed and get involved.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Cooper Drum Site is located at 9316 South Atlantic Avenue in South Gate, California. It is a 3.8-acre site in a mixed residential, commercial and industrial area. Rayo Avenue borders the site to the east and the former Tweedy Elementary School property is located directly to the south.

Several different companies have used the site to recondition and recycle empty steel drums that once contained a variety of industrial chemicals:

- Cooper Drum Company operated the facility from 1971 until 1992;
- The drum reconditioning business was sold to Waymire Drum Company in 1992; and
- Consolidated Drum Company purchased the facility in 1996 and is the current drum reconditioning operator at the site.



Since Cooper Drum’s operations were sold in 1992, closed-top steel tanks have been installed over the pits, and the trenches have been replaced with steel piping. Consolidated Drum, the current operator, continues to use an above-ground enclosed system for containing liquid wastes. **Current activities at the site are not considered to be harmful to the environment.**

Today, the site has drum cleaning and storage areas, an office, a warehouse and maintenance buildings. All buildings have concrete floors and the entire facility was paved with asphalt in 1986.

HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Beginning in 1984, there were several incidents involving the release of hazardous substances at the site. This caused the Los Angeles Department of Health Services (LADHS) to start testing site soils. Since 1984, the LADHS, the California Department of Health Services (now known as the Department of Toxic Substances Control), EPA, and consultants working for Cooper Drum Company have conducted a number of soil and groundwater studies.

The studies have identified the following hazardous substances in soils at or near the site:

- Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), which include:
 - Tetrachloroethylene (PCE, a cleaning solvent)
 - Trichloroethylene (TCE, a cleaning solvent)
 - Dichloroethylene (DCE, a by-product of TCE)
- Petroleum hydrocarbons (usually associated with fuels and oils)
- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs, also used in electrical transformers)
- Several metals

Some of these hazardous chemicals—principally VOCs—have also been found in groundwater beneath the site.

IS MY DRINKING WATER OK?

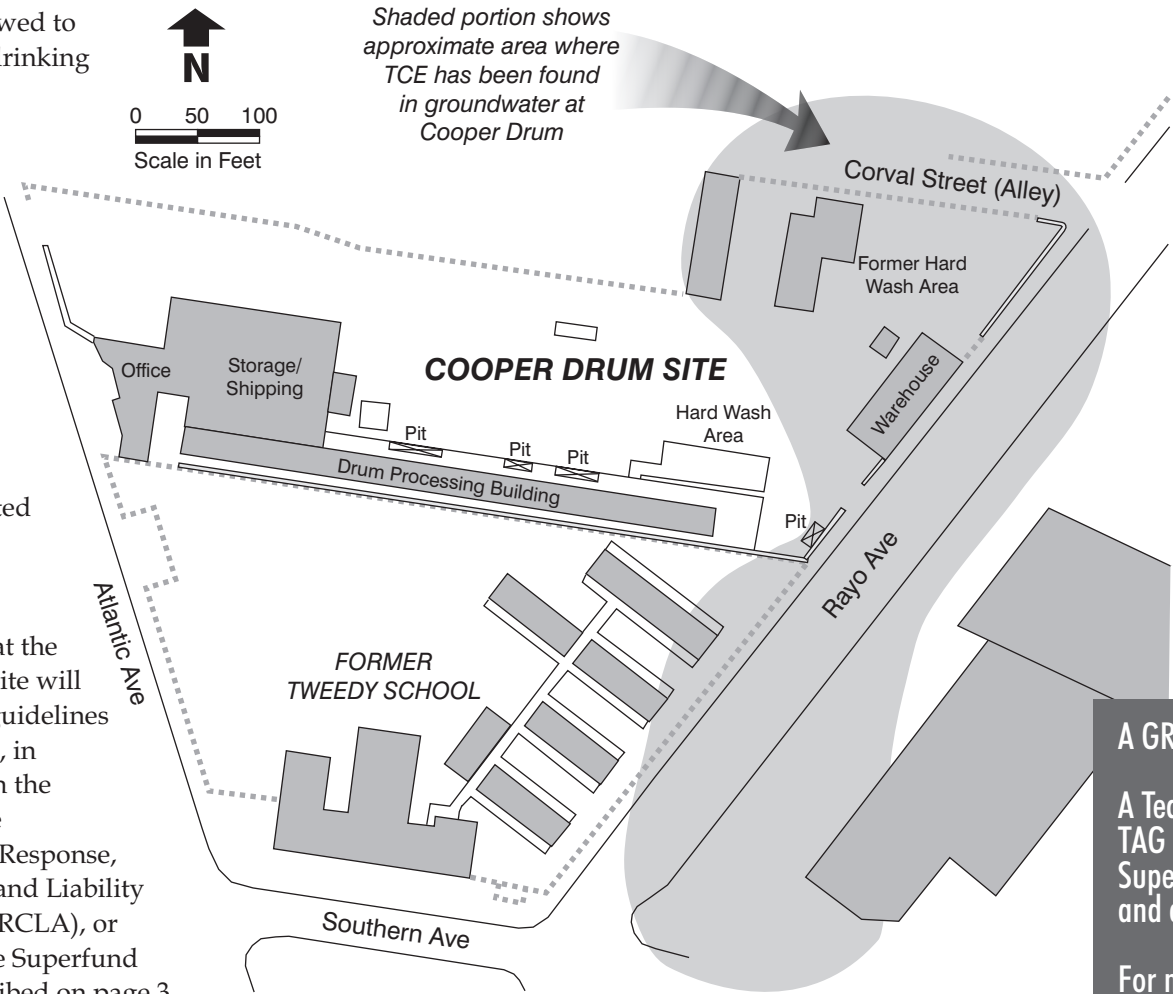
Yes. Although groundwater contamination has occurred, groundwater aquifers used for drinking water are much deeper than the area of contamination and have not been affected by the Cooper Drum Site. All drinking water supplies are tested and comply with federal and state standards.

In 1987, the city of South Gate closed four of its municipal water wells when they were found to contain PCE. These wells are approximately 1,000 feet away from the Cooper Drum Site and the city listed Cooper Drum as a possible source of the contamination. Recent investigations have found groundwater contamination beneath the site; **however, this contamination does not appear to be moving toward municipal water supply wells.**

In 1988, Tweedy Elementary School was closed following several chemical releases from neighboring industries, including a release from the Cooper Drum Site. The school has since moved to another location.

EPA’s more recent studies (1996-2000) of groundwater near the site found VOCs in the vicinity of the Cooper Drum hard wash area. A contaminated groundwater “plume” (a defined area of contamination) extends horizontally from the northeast corner of the site several hundred yards toward the east/southeast (see figure below). This plume contains VOCs at levels higher than the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL). The MCL is the maximum level at which a chemical is allowed to exist in public drinking water.

In 1992, EPA first proposed to add the Cooper Drum Site to the National Priorities List (NPL), also known as the Superfund list. The site was listed in June 2001. Studies and the cleanup of contamination at the Cooper Drum Site will follow federal guidelines and regulations, in accordance with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA), or Superfund. The Superfund process is described on page 3.



EPA'S COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM







EPA is committed to sharing information and getting your input about environmental issues that could affect your community. We will be preparing a Community Involvement Plan to guide the way we work to involve your community in decisions about the Cooper Drum Site.

Some of our community involvement activities may include:

- Sending fact sheets to the community as new information is developed at the Cooper Drum Site.
- Holding public meetings during the Superfund cleanup process.

THE SUPERFUND PROCESS AND TIMETABLE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

The Superfund process involves a series of environmental studies and investigations to determine the best way to clean up a contaminated site. These investigations and studies take place in different steps leading up to the site cleanup or remedial action. Completion of all steps may take several years. These steps, and their status at the Cooper Drum Site, are described briefly below.

-  **Preliminary Assessment/Site Investigation**
Discover and verify potential hazardous waste sites. Determine whether further investigation is needed.
Status at Cooper Drum: Complete
-  **Remedial Investigation (RI)/Feasibility Study (FS)**
Sample, investigate and analyze the sites (RI). Identify possible cleanup options and their costs (FS).
Status at Cooper Drum: Expect completion in March 2002
-  **Proposed Plan**
Propose the preferred cleanup remedy for the site, and present this information to the public for comment. A public meeting is held during a 30-day public comment period.
Status at Cooper Drum: Expected in May 2002
-  **Record of Decision (ROD)**
Documentation of the chosen cleanup remedy for the site.
Status at Cooper Drum: Expected in September 2002
-  **Remedial Design (RD)/Remedial Action (RA)**
Design cleanup remedies (RD). Construct and start up treatment systems and/or monitoring programs (RA).
Status at Cooper Drum: Will begin following signing of the ROD
-  **Operation and Maintenance**
Carry out long-term cleanup of the site, and monitor the effectiveness of the cleanup remedies.
Status at Cooper Drum: Will begin after all remedial actions are in place

A GRANT FOR THE COMMUNITY

A Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) may be available for the community. The TAG program provides funds for qualified citizen groups affected by a Superfund site to hire independent technical advisors to help them understand and comment on site-related information and participate in cleanup decisions.

For more information, please contact: Alheli Baños at (415) 972-3245 or (800) 231-3075.